

Listing of the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for determining optimal harvest window of a medicinal plants, wherein the medicinal plant is used to prepare a standardized extract of the medicinal plant, the method comprising the steps of:

harvesting at least one plant at a plurality of maturation stages for the plant;
producing a preparation of the plant for each maturation stage;
adding a preparation ~~of the plant~~ to a monocyte cell culture;
harvesting the cell culture;
analyzing the cell culture for a level of transcriptional product ~~the medicinal plant induces~~ from the cell culture;
observing the level of transcriptional product corresponding to each of the different maturation stages;
determining a concentration of a marker compound for each ~~of the plants preparation~~ at the plurality of maturation stages; and
selecting a maturation stage with:
(i) ~~an acceptable concentration of marker compound~~ that is acceptable for standardization of the preparation; and
(ii) ~~a most potent induction activity~~ the highest level of transcriptional product.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Currently Amended) A method for determining optimal harvest window of *Echinacea* plants, wherein the *Echinacea* plants are used to prepare a standardized *Echinacea* extract, the method comprising the steps of:

harvesting at least one *Echinacea* plant at a plurality of maturation stages for the *Echinacea* plant;
producing a preparation of the *Echinacea* plant for each maturation stage;

adding a preparation of the plant to a monocyte cell culture;
harvesting the cell culture;
analyzing the cell culture for a level of immune-stimulatory product induced by Echinacea the preparation;
observing the level of the immune-stimulatory product corresponding to each of the different maturation stages;
determining a concentration of a marker compound of each of the plants preparation at the plurality of maturation stages; and
selecting a maturation stage with:
 (i) an acceptable concentration of marker compound that is acceptable for standardization of the preparation; and
 (ii) a most potent induction activity the highest level of immune-stimulatory product.

4. (Cancelled)

5. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 3 wherein the marker compound is selected from a group consisting of chicoric acid, alkylamides, glycoproteins, polysaccharides and combinations thereof.

6. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 3 wherein the immune-stimulatory product is selected from the group consisting of cytokine mRNA and chemokine mRNA.

7. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 3 wherein the immune-stimulatory product is an mRNA transcript selected from the group consisting of IL-1 alpha, IL-1 beta, IL-6, IL-8, IL-10, tumor necrosis factor alpha, interferon-gamma and macrophage inflammatory protein-1.

8-22 (Cancelled)

23. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the monocyte cell culture is a THP-1 cell culture.

24. (Currently Amended) A method for determining optimal harvest window of *Echinacea* plants, wherein the *Echinacea* plants are used to prepare a standardized *Echinacea* extract, the method comprising the steps of:

harvesting at least one *Echinacea* plant at a plurality of maturation stages for the *Echinacea* plant;

producing a preparation of the *Echinacea* plant for each maturation stage;

adding a preparation of the plant to a monocyte or macrophage cell culture;

harvesting the cell culture;

analyzing the cell culture for a level of a translation product ~~the medicinal plant induces~~ from the cell culture by each preparation;

observing the level of translation product corresponding to each of the different maturation stages;

determining a concentration of marker compound for each ~~of the plants~~

preparation at the plurality of maturation stages; and

selecting a maturation stage with:

(i) ~~an acceptable concentration of marker compound that is acceptable for standardization of the preparation; and a most potent induction activity~~

(ii) the highest level of translation product induced from the cell culture.

25. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 24, wherein the monocyte or macrophage cell culture is a THP-1 cell culture.